Daytona, Florida.
March 17, 1898.

My dear Arthur:

I have put off writing you for some time until I could have my kodak exposures developed and make a few blue-prints to send you, for I think pictures give a better idea of places and events than any written description, even though the pictures be but poor amateur blue-prints. These of mine are especially poor partly because I used too small a stop when making exposures and partly because while trying to print I was also making a waterwheel and operating a toy railroad for Robert and his friend Alfred – or "Alfie."

First I want to thank you for the nice letter you wrote to me the day after Christmas telling me about your Christmas celebration and the fine presents you had. And how well you write! I have not

been so pleased for a long time as when I opened your letter and saw that beautiful handwriting with your signature at the end; it is a delight to the eye and I congratulate you on acquiring so splendid a hand. I wish you would teach it to Harold and Charles.

December 25th hardly seemed like Christmas here, no snow or cold, and we had a mild celebration as the stores supply very little in the way of toys and things for the children, but Robert and Thirza hung up their stockings and enjoyed the nic-nacs that Santa Claus put in them, and after breakfast they were rejoiced with the beautiful presents from Springfield. I wish you could really know how much they have enjoyed the presents from Wyndhurst. The chariot and the dollies are a daily source of delight yet; the kindergarten utensils are a never ceasing joy

to Thirza; the purses are highly prized. Robert takes his to bed with him every night and sleeps with it under his pillow, and I occasionally hear him in the early morning before anybody is up counting over the $2.17 which it now contains. He took it with him on a recent visit to St. Augustine and spent 25¢ of his own money which was a great event as you can readily imagine. The pillow dex that Harold gave Robert was greatly enjoyed for awhile but I regret to say that it has seen such hard service that all that is left of it is the string to go down the middle of the table.

Your letter speaks of snow and of sliding down hill. Robert has missed the snow and has occasionally expressed the wish that he could be back at Sumner avenue and play with Alan Orr in the snow.



Our little house here we have found very comfortable and we have been very happy all winter. The children spend much of their time playing in the sand and dirt in the back yard and mechanics, architecture, agriculture, mining and various other branches of science receive their active attention.

Our house fronts on Ridgewood Avenue, and I doubt if the natural beauty of this avenue could be surpassed.



For two miles the street is overarched with live-oaks, water oaks, and hickories, all draped with festoons of the gray Spanish moss, and these trees are interspersed with tropical palmettos, waxy-leaved magnolias, fragrant bays, holly, and other trees, and here and there great wild grape vines climb about among the branches in a weird though graceful and beautiful manner. The street is paved with marl hard and smooth as a floor and is lined with pretty houses and cottages. The picture will give you an idea of the beauty of this avenue, and you will recognize baby Thirza with her lunch basket on the way to kindergarten, where she and Robert go every morning — except saturday and sunday of course. We enjoy living on this beautiful avenue and we wheel up and down the smooth road very often.



Here is a picture of the kindergarten with a group of children on the veranda. I am sorry that a break in the film spoiled this negative for otherwise it would have been a good picture and would have been prized by Mrs. Glenn the proprietor of the kindergarten.



This is another picture of the kinder-garten with Thirza stand-ing out in the playground. She had dropped her lunch basket

and was just starting to pick it up when I snapped her. The children enjoy playing under the big trees at the left of the picture, and Thirza is delighted with the quantities of roses now blooming in the front yard.

Altogether the Kindergarten is a pretty attractive place, though the children all have whooping cough now and Robert and Thirza are beginning to "whoop it up" with vigor. A doctor at Kennebunk Beach told us they had whooping cough all summer, but if so they seem to be having it over again now.



Here is one of the pretty little cottages on Ridgewood avenue where some friends of ours live. Can you see Robert and his wheel?



Here is "The Ridgewood", a pretty hotel a block above us where we have had some good times.

Many things are done differently here from the way they are at the north,- for instance the laundry work is almost invariably done out of doors - and somewhere near nearly every house you will see a little palmetto thatched roof supported by posts covering the wash bench and tubs. Some of the laundries have no roof over them but are just out under the trees,- and such a one is this of our next door neighbor where Ruth snapped "Judy" hard



at work one monday morning. Judy afterward told Mrs. Brower that she "just reckoned she'd have to wear her best waist to wash in 'cause so many folks stopped to look at her and now they done photographed her." I don't wonder people stop to look at Judy for she certainly presents a picturesque appearance with the tubs and bundles of clothes about her, a fire burning under the big iron kettle, the moss waving over her head and the sunlight glinting through the trees about her.



We are only two blocks away from the river. Here is a picture of Beach street which runs for a couple of miles, the length of the town, along the river front. Stores, houses and a few hotels

line the west side of this street and on the east side a narrow parkage separates it from the beautiful Halifax River, which is here about a mile wide.

On Washington's birthday we had quite a celebration, after the order of the "Mardi Gras" at New Orleans, 'though not so extensive of course. The parade was very good, however, considering the size of the town. I snapped the Kodak at some of the floats as they were turning from Beach street to cross the



bridge, and 'though the pictures are not very good you may be interested in them.
Here is the town hall on the corner

with some of the crowd waiting for the procession.



Here comes the head of the procession with the Marshalls on horseback just turning the corner.

After the mounted escort came "King Carnival" seated on a gorgeous throne on a great float drawn by four horses. He looked very grand and gay I can assure you. Behind him you will see a few "U.S. Regulars" on wheels and back of them



a lot more floats coming down the street. Many of the merchants had elaborate floats advertising their business.

Here is one of the best floats, on which thirty-seven children rode and



sang patriotic songs as they rolled along.



This is Mrs. Spangler's pony cart trimmed with pink and white ribbon and palmetto.

This poor picture gives no idea of the best float in the procession.



It was a very large float on heavy iron wheels, consisting of a platform covered and draped with red. On it rode a dozen or so of red devils, hoofs, horns, tails and all. In the center of the platform was a pit from which issued volumes of flame and smoke, and several of the devils were occupied in chucking small boys head first into this sulphurous pit. I saw the float afterward and discovered that the boys only went down by the side of the fire and crawled out under a side curtain and came up to be burned over again. Others of the devils were engaged in fishing with whiskey bottles on the end of their lines for bait; others were sporting with jugs labeled "Tangle-foot", "Bug-juice", etc. Bats, spiders, snakes, centipeds and other cheerful things seemed to be crawling all about the float; it was really

hideous, and some of the children who saw it howled and cried with fright. Robert at once comprehended that it was not real and said he wished he could be one of those boys to be burned up. I presume this desire was prompted by the fact that he recognized "Alfie's" legs waving about over the fire-box.

Here is a detachment of bicycles



showing some ladies with themselves and their wheels both dressed in white.

In this picture you will notice a man on a wheel with one leg thrown out at the side.



This young man took first prize for the best individual "get up". He was gotten up like a tramp - and was the very best tramp I ever saw. He had a horrible old wheel, spokes all twisted up, rags tied around the tire, great ungainly handle-bar and saddle. He wabbled all over the road and occasionally ran off into the crowd scattering them, or fell off and rolled around in everybodys way. He is a good trick rider, and occasionally would do some ludicrous trick, - for instance I saw him run off into the crowd and fall off. gather up the wheel, take hold of the handle bars and jump way up so that he almost stood on his hands on the handle bar, kicked his legs up in the air, came down with a bang right into the saddle and rode on as slick as you please.



Here is some feature of the procession - I cannot make out what it is myself, if you can, let me know.

One of the best times I have had this winter was when I went down the river for seventeen days in a houseboat. We got 230 ducks, all fine varieties = Teal, widgeon, pin-tails, bald-pates, black mallards, green head mallards, etc.



This picture was taken on deck after a duck hunt. My halo seems to have been unusually strong that morning.



This poor picture of my companion sport holding a nine pound trout he had just caught will serve to show you what sort of fishing we had. We fished mostly by trolling, keeping out from one to two hundred feet of line with a "phantom minnow" at the end, and caught mostly trout and bass, right gamy fish I assure you.



This is the "St. Sebastian", a steamer on the Indian River in which Aunt Ruth and



I hope to take a trip a little later.
One of the prettiest places I saw on my trip was this southern point of Merritt's Island. This picture shows the Indian River on the left, the point of Merritt's Island in the center, the Banana River coming down from behind the Island, and on the right the shore of the peninsular lying between the Banana River and the Atlantic Ocean.
This picture was taken just after we had passed the point and headed up the Banana. A beautiful spot long to be remembered.





This is not the boat I went in, but a fine house boat we were shown over by the owner.

The picture will show you what a house-boat is like. This one is 68 feet long, 22 feet wide, and has elegant rooms, parlor, bed rooms, kitchen, etc. — all the comforts of home.



On saturdays it has been our custom to go over to the beach and spend the day, taking a picnic lunch and going in bathing. The children both enjoy splashing about in the water, and Robert is especially fearless and happy.



In this group Mr. Spangler looms up on the left. Alfred Malby, Robert's friend, comes next. Robert is tucked away under his mother's arm and baby Thirza stands right in front of her mother. It is a fine wide beach as you can see and old ocean is rolling in most invitingly. You should see Robert plunge about in the surf.



When it gets hot here in town we expect to shut up our little cottage and move over to the



beach where it is cooler. Have not yet decided whether we shall board at the "Seaside Inn", or at "Surf Crest" a small boarding house run by the Spanglers.

The above picture shows the fine wide veranda in front of "Surf Crest". The view from this veranda, especially from the second story, is grand, - one can see for several miles up and down the beach.



This shows a view from this veranda, - the house is on a bluff right over the beach. The little fence is around the top of the bath houses, a fine smooth floor with benches



This picture was taken on one of our picnic days,- the bicycle goes with us every where.

Thirza greatly enjoys riding on the carrier on my wheel, and dearly loves to ride over to the beach and pick up shells.

Here is a picture of the ruins of an old sugar mill about six miles from our house. It is an interesting place to visit and the history of this part of the country is all very interesting.



The young lady in this picture is Miss Rita Murphy of Springfield, whom you must know.



Here are a couple of pic-nic pictures



which I took last Spring. You see we can picnic here at any time of the year.

This is the main street in the town of Welaka where I spent the month of March last year. It is a beautiful



street, with grass growing all over it and grand oak trees shading it. Welaka is the town where Dr. Hurlbut has an orange grove.



This is a house where I visited at Welaka. It is a typical Florida house, has a wide veranda on all four sides, and the kitchen and servants quarters are in separate buildings.

I send you an advertising folder with pictures of some of the hotels along this east coast of Florida. Aunt Ruth, Robert and I have just had a three days visit at St. Augustine which we enjoyed greatly. We took our bicycles and wheeled all over the town. I suppose you remember all the attractions there.

With much love to all, and hoping to see you again before many months,

Your loving uncle,

A. G. Merriam.